(b) whether Government have taken any concrete step for initiating negotiation with the extremist groups like DHD, UPDS, NDFB, BLT and other groups; and

(c) if so, the details of initiatives taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI I. D. SWAMI): (a) Government is committed to restore the peace in the North-Eastern region. The Government has extended an invitation to all those militant groups who have strayed from the paths of togetherness to give up path of violence and to come forward for talks within the four corners of our Constitution.

(b) and (c) Government has already entered into ceasefire agreement with NSCN(K) on 28th April, 2001. In Assam, the Bodo Liberation Tiger (BLT) declared unilateral suspension of its operations against the Security Forces *w.e.f.* 14th July, 1999. Union Home Minister announced suspension of operation by the security forces against the BLT in the Parliament on 15th March, 2000. Negotiations with the BLT are continuing. Other militant outfits have not yet responded to peace talks within the parameters indicated.

Measures taken to dispel misgivings of people of NES

341. DR. MANMOHAN SINGH:
SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO:
SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:
SHRI PRAKANTA WARISA:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any effective consultation was held with all the Governments of North-Eastern States before finalising the details of the new ceasefire arrangements with NSCN (IM);

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what measures have been adopted to dispel the serious misgivings of people and Government of North-Eastern States,

particularly Manipur and Assam with regard to the new ceasefire agreement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI I. D. SWAMI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Two formal rounds of talks were held with the Chief Ministers of the concerned North-Eastern States including Manipur on 28th September, 2000 and 2nd March, 2001.

(c) It has been the position of the Government of India that the territorial integrity of the North-Eastern States would be kept intact. This was reiterated by the Prime Minister in his appeal made to the people of Manipur on 8th July, 2001, while announcing the Government's decision to review the ceasefire agreement including the words "without territorial limits". As a part of the process of review, the Prime Minister would meet the Chief Ministers of the North-Eastern States, on 27th July, 2001.

Freedom Fighters

342. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of freedom fighters, State-wise and category-wise as on 30th June, 2001;

(b) the age of the youngest and the oldest freedom fighter as on 30th June, 2001;

(c) the total number of freedom fighters' widows, State-wise category-wise; and

(d) the age of the youngest and oldest widow of the freedom fighters, category-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI CHENNAMANENI VIDYA SAGAR RAO): (a) A statement showing the number of freedom fighters sanctioned Central Samman Pension State-wise as on 30-6-2001 is annexed (*see* below). Category-wise information is not maintained.

(b) to (d) As per the records maintained, Swatantrata Sainik